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Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play !
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own !"



ALFRED AUGUSTUS STOCKTON



Address delivered in Centenary Methodist Church,
St. John, N. B., by Reverend Howard Sprague, D.D.
on Tuesday, March 19th, nineteen hundred and seven



WITH every stroke of the pendulum the shadow falls upon a hundred dwellings and as many families feel the parting pang. At this hour there are ten thousand homes where tearful eyes watch for the signs of departure and where spirits face the mystery of death. There are many times the number where the parting has been recent, and where the shadow has not yet been lifted, nor the sorrow healed. There is hardly one where a casual word may not start sorrowful memories, and where hearts do not often, in secret, hold sad communings with the past. There is, therefore, hardly anyone, except where an evil life has destroyed the affections and the moral nature, to whom there would not be comfort and peace in the revelation were it really believed, made in the words which sound as sweetly now as centuries ago, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

We meet today because a fellow-man has crossed the mysterious river through which all must go. We meet in such large numbers because he had lived many years in this city, was known to all the citizens, admired by everyone capable of admiration for the good and the true, and beloved by very many. We meet in this place because of the relations which he held, on the one hand, in public life to the City of Saint John, and on the other to the church whose home of worship this is, and to the denomination to which it belongs.

Since Friday morning, when the report of his death spread through the city and brought a general sense of public and personal loss, much has been said of him in the press and from the pulpit. Many tributes have been paid to his worth, many appreciations have been made of his character, his attainments, his intellectual powers, and some sketches of his career. You have all read them; there is nothing more to be said. Those who have known him best, and could judge, have said that he was a lawyer of superior attainments, a scholar of varied and elegant culture, an attractive and persuasive speaker, with much of the orator's gifts, a distinguished representative and servant of the people. He was all that, and what more can be said? Something can be said with which all this cannot be compared, without which all this is but "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." He was a good man and a Christian

gentleman, pure and true and faithful in his private, professional and public life. Sometimes when we honor the memory of the dead we speak of their good qualities and rehearse their good deeds, and we try to forget the rest. In his case there is nothing that need be forgotten, as there was at no time anything to be concealed. He did not indeed wear his heart upon his sleeve, and the duties of his life must have brought him into associations with many with whom he could have no familiar friendship, and who, though they may have thought they knew him, could have little sympathy with his tastes or appreciation of his ideals. But he had nothing to hide from the keen eye of honesty or the tender sensibilities of the pure and good. No threat of exposure could ever have had a terror for him, or put a bridle on his tongue:

"Whatever record leap to light,
He never shall be shamed."

He grew up in the country, nurtured in a Christian home and in perpetual contact with the influences of nature. In his seventeenth year (or about that time) he went to Mount Allison and graduated in the class of 1864. At the beginning of his college course he had decided to give his life to the profession of the law, and at the close of it came to this city to study in his uncle's office. That time of his life, which so thoroughly determines for good or evil the whole career, was distinguished especially for three things.

First, he devoted himself to the study of his profession with all his capacity and enthusiasm, determined from the first to be the best and reach the highest of which he was capable. Second, instead of wasting his leisure in the frivolities, or yielding to the allurements of city life, which ensnare and enfeeble, and perhaps destroy, so many young men who come from the country with health and purity and promise, he devoted it to other studies which he believed would increase his efficiency, and to the general reading of the best literature, which makes a cultured man.

In the third place, and most important of all, he was true to the moral principles in which he had been brought up, and, though not at that time a member of the church, he retained a reverence for religious things, was regular in attendance at the services of the church, and was, as I know, positively influenced by the preaching of the time. He was interested in public speaking as such, and, both for the present pleasure of it and its helpfulness to him in his endeavor to cultivate the speaking art, he liked to go where the speaking was the best. But, even then, he was more interested in the substance than the form. During his student life in this city he was especially impressed and influenced by the preaching of the Rev. J. R. Narraway, one of "the great four," as we, who knew them then, call them as we now look back. Two others of the four, he had been listening to in Sackville, DeWolfe and Allison. Of the

fourth, Dr. Matthew Richey, he may have heard only the fame. He greatly admired the massive thought, the close reasoning, the flowing eloquence of Mr. Narraway. Once I asked him in those days, "Where do you go to church now, and who of the preachers do you like best?" I have forgotten his answer, except the last few words, which were: "But, for sledge-hammer thoughts I go over to hear Narraway."

The moral and religious principles whose hold of him was strengthened in the years in which so many young men let them go, held him through all his life, and determined his career. Perhaps, with his great mental force and his power of forensic and platform speech, he might, with other ideals, tastes, and sympathies, have taken a surer and shorter road to political preferment and material possessions. But he cared above all for the things of the soul: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, he thought on these things." In all things conscience was supreme. It could not but be so in the practice of the law, as they who can judge, alike of his knowledge, his power, his practice, as it is not possible for me to do, have already testified. That it was so in political and parliamentary life, the open record is full and clear. An eloquent advocate of his party's policy, when he believed the policy to be good, he

was always found on the side of righteousness and purity and the country's welfare. That old maxim of jurisprudence, "The well-being of the people is the supreme law," was a fundamental maxim of his political life.

Now, this service in this church and all that has been said might, under some conditions, be but conformity to custom and the performance of professional duty. It is with far other feelings you are here and I have spoken. So far am I from speaking simply as a minister today, that I feel myself to be here more as a brother of Alfred Stockton than in any other relation. There is for me a peculiar tenderness in this hour, and, if I may be permitted, I would pay to his memory the tribute of a brother's admiration and love.

Nearly forty-eight years ago we entered the halls of Mount Allison on the same day. We were drawn to each other from the first. For four years we were in daily companionship, in the class, on the campus, in the village street. For the two last years we shared between us a college dormitory, and sat every evening face to face at the same table while we worked at our studies. Once he watched at my bedside when for days I was nearer the dark river than I have been since. Through the forty years and more that have passed since I left college, a year before him, we have maintained an intimacy of friendship never for a moment disturbed, and have

carried the feelings of college comradeship through the changes of life.

A Roman poet, "tenderest of Roman poets nineteen hundred years ago," broken-hearted at his brother's grave, said: "Accept these offerings, wet with a brother's many tears; and forever and ever, Brother, hail and farewell!" But the nineteen hundred years have made a change. It was being made while the Roman wrote; and instead of the "Ave atque Vale" of the poet's hopeless woe, we have "the living hope to which we have been begotten by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead." And I do not bid my brother an eternal farewell. He has gone before me, on and up to the City of God, to the holy company, to the vision of the Lord, to the song of the redeemed, to the greater work that awaited him, and for which God prepared him, through a life of faithful service and by the discipline of pain.

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